

There's fun and fitness in the pool for asthmatic kids

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(HealthDay)—Safe, healthy fun for kids with asthma may be as near as

the neighborhood pool, one respiratory specialist says.

Staying active can be a challenge for the more than 6 million children with asthma in the United States, noted Dr. Tod Olin. He's a pediatric pulmonary specialist at National Jewish Health in Denver.

"It can be a dilemma for many families. All it takes is one [asthma attack](#), and suddenly patients can become very tentative about overdoing it," he said in a hospital news release.

"When it comes to cardio activities that are well-tolerated, [swimming](#), specifically, is highly recommended, particularly in indoor swimming pools," Olin said.

The high humidity in indoor swimming pools protects against asthma attacks by keeping airways open, he said.

"We think that the way asthma attacks happen is that the airways dry out, and that sets off a cascade of reactions that ultimately squeezes down the airway," Olin explained. "If we can prevent that initial airway-drying step by staying in a humid environment, we prevent the asthma attack all together."

Children with asthma have often been told to limit exercise, he noted. "More recently, we've changed our approach," he said. "We now encourage kids to exercise, especially as the obesity epidemic has become more and more problematic."

Starting with swimming and letting kids with asthma choose the sports they enjoy make it more likely they will stay active, he said.

"I generally recommend that they use their albuterol inhaler about 15 minutes before exercise, but if their [asthma](#) is well-controlled, there is

no reason to limit any activity," Olin said. "If their heart is taking them toward a certain sport, they should be encouraged to pursue that."

More information: The American Lung Association has more on [asthma in children](#).

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